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STATE FOR EA
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DCHA/OFDA FOR GGOTTLIEB, AFERRARA, ACONVERY,
CGOTTSCHALK
DCHA/FFP FOR JDWORKEN
AFR/EA FOR JBORNS, SMCCLURE

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SUBJECT: OFDA DRM DIRECTOR VISIT TO KENYA

Summary

¶1. OFDA Director for Disaster Response and Mitigation (DRM), Ms. Antoinette Ferrara, traveled to OFDA's East and Central Regional Office (ECARO), Nairobi, from July 12-16. The purpose of the visit was to consult with USAID regional leadership on OFDA activities, meet current OFDA regional partners including NGOs and the UN, and visit drought affected areas and OFDA responses in Kenya's Makueni District. Ms. Ferrara noted a strong relationship between the OFDA ECARO and other USAID offices, and that the Kenyan drought is negatively affecting agricultural populations in eastern Kenya. End Summary.

Background

¶2. OFDA's DRM division is responsible for several aspects of OFDA's field operations world-wide. These include the management of DARTs (Disaster Assistance Response Teams) and supervision of OFDA regional offices. Ms. Ferrara was appointed director of the division in May 2006 and was making her introductory visit to the region.

¶3. The visit to Kenya was part of a trip that also included stops in Sudan and Ethiopia. While in Kenya, meetings were held with USAID Kenya and USAID East Africa Mission Directors, as well as with OFDA grantees working in Kenya, Somalia and south Sudan. Ms. Ferrara also had an opportunity to meet with ECARO staff.

¶4. The visit included a two-day field trip to Kenya's Makueni District. Farmers in the district lost the majority of their crops due to drought conditions in 2005, and OFDA is currently responding through two NGOs to improve access to clean water for 128,000 people.

OFDA ECARO Support to Regional USAID Missions

¶5. During the meeting with USAID Kenya, the Mission Director described to Ms. Ferrara the close cooperation with the OFDA ECARO office during the 2006 Kenyan drought response. OFDA Regional Advisors and Kenyan Mission staff conducted joint assessments of drought affected areas and collaborated closely on the programmatic approval process.

¶6. Comments made by USAID Mission Director for East Africa included the important role OFDA's Regional Office plays in supplying emergency surge capacity and technical expertise to several of the USAID programs in

limited presence countries in the Region.

OFDA Regional Partners Feedback

¶17. Some of OFDA's Kenya partners including CARE, World Vision and UNICEF briefed Ms. Ferrara on current operations and anticipated future needs. Several pointed out that the lack of rainfall during the previous years had only aggravated a chronic lack of development in the affected region, and that future attention needs to be given to improve local livelihoods and social infrastructure.

¶18. OFDA Somalia partners expressed opinions on the effects the rapidly evolving political and security situation might have on the humanitarian situation and operations. Ms. Ferrara noted that coordination mechanisms for the UN and the NGOs working in Somalia are unduly complex and should be streamlined.

Drought Effects on Eastern Kenya's Farmers

¶19. The DRM Director inaugurated a protected water system constructed by partner World Vision and the community in the Kalili area of Makueni district, which is now providing clean water for 5,000 drought affected families. In total, the visit looked at six examples of OFDA emergency water interventions that capitalize on local technologies and capacity throughout the district. The programs were initiated following the disaster declaration in September 2005. Several of the projects have been completed and are already having a positive impact on local communities.

¶10. Ms. Ferrara noted that agricultural communities such as those visited in the Makueni District were severely affected by the lack of rains over the last several planting seasons and required assistance. The problems in agricultural communities have been somewhat neglected by the media during the regional drought, which has mainly focused on its effects on pastoralists.

¶11. Note: Ms. Ferrara has cleared this cable. End note. ROWE